

I follow with great interest and concern the court ordered review of broadcast ownership rules and limits. As someone who has worked for over 10 years in an independantly owned TV station that produces nightly local news, I feel I have an insight that reaches beyond that of the audience we serve. I have witnessed a steady erosion of content and variety of news, or what is deemed news in the New York market. If fewer companies are in the business of reporting and gathering news I do not see how this will better serve the public interest. It is already abundantly clear that there is less discussion of local issues of any significant concern to the viewing public. The majority of time in local news is spent on sports and weather with a healthy dose of "infotainment" such as Hollywood box office movie grosses and gossip about the stars. I have personally witnessed the elimination of real news stories from the lineup because they do not support the personal views or interests of the owner or management of this station. I shudder to think what would happen to the news if this company had control of all the TV stations in this area. No stories critical of any business or crooked politician. No coverage of Democratic candidates or views. Only stories and events that are related to or approved by the Sales department will have significant exposure in the market.

As far as the idea that there are abundant new sources and outlets for news vis a vis the internet, let me state that without money and lots of it nobody can deliver news content to a substantial audience. The internet may have some relevance for news in the future but once again that will be determined by the rulemakers who determine the barriers to entry and roadblocks to success of any media contender. Today in the New York market there are nightly news broadcsts on 2,4,5,7,9,11,13 and 55. I would say that 7 out of 8 get their news stories from the Associated press or CNN newswire feeds so you get virtually the same stories in the same way at slightly different times being broadcast to the public. Where is the independance or difference of opinion supposed to come from